

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 20, 2012

Agenda Item: Montana State Parks Biennial Fee Rule

Division: Parks **Action Needed:** Approval of Final Rule

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 minutes

Background: The Montana State Parks Biennial Fee Rule establishes fees and associated rules for the state park system in accordance with 23-1-105 MCA. The Rule identifies fees for entrance to state parks (nonresidents), camping, facility rental, guided tours (e.g. Lewis and Clark Caverns), and Special Uses at state parks. The commission last increased resident camping fees in 2002 and nonresident camping fees in 2010 and authorized camping reservation fees in 2010. The Biennial Fee Rule also provides direction to staff for managing visitor use, e.g. occupancy limits at campsites and permit requirements for group use and special events.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Montana State Parks conducted a 30-day public comment period on the tentative fee rule approved by the Commission on November 8, 2012. A total of 17 comments were received, all of which referenced the proposed food storage rules in Section XI.C. Two of the comments provided detailed reasons supporting food storage rules and 15 comments opposed food storage rules, only one of which provided any reasons. In addition, one comment also supported the proposed rules regarding livestock use in state parks. Based on public comments, the proposed food storage rules have been amended to include “Food storage rules may be established in state parks that have a history of or high probability for human/bear conflicts and/or are located adjacent to or nearby other public lands where food storage rules are already in place” and to add “livestock feed” to the list of items subject to storage.

Alternatives and Analysis: The Montana State Parks final fee rule includes the following highlights:

- There are no proposed fee increases.
- Peak season and reservation program season are extended to include the third Friday of May though the third Sunday of September, when potable water and a higher level of staffing and service are provided.
- There is a proposed \$3.00 per night reduction in off season resident camping fees, as a means of acknowledging a lower level of staffing, service and amenities, particularly potable water during the off season (third Monday of September through the third Thursday of May)
- Backcountry camping is redefined with a reduced fee (from \$7 per camping unit to \$4 per camping unit).
- Check-in and check-out times for campsites, cabins, yurts and tepees have been specified more clearly.
- Campsite capacity definitions are established for single, double, quad, and group campsites.
- Fees for large-group campsites are more clearly specified based on maximum pre-determined campsite capacity (camping units and/or 8 person increments).
- Food storage rules are established with standards for allowable storage techniques.
- Livestock use rules are established with standards for certified weed seed free feed.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale The department recommends that the Commission approve the final rule as proposed, with amendments to the food storage rules as noted above.

Proposed Motion “I move that the Commission approve the final state parks biennial fee rule.”